

N U L L - F Feb., '71

special
austerity
issue

IT SEEMS, each time I set out to do another issue of NULL-F, that most of my space is devoted to bringing things up to date since the previous issue. And slowly--certainly--I am being brought to a sharp awareness of one essential fact: I am deadwood. Yes, and minacing with eight pages a year. Shocking! Shameful! The worse so, because I feel no real shame at all. In fact, when my thoughts turn to FAPA (which they do increasingly rarely these days), it's usually to ponder the whereabouts of the most recent mailing...still unread.

But this is a cycle I am going through. No matter if it's a little longer than average: it's a cycle. One of these days the dam will burst and I shall unload no less than eight pages into every mailing!

...Or so I tell myself.

The advent of another NULL-F has become a time for soul-searching, a time in which I perenially ask myself why I am sticking it out and depriving some worthy fan on the waiting-list the delightful opportunity to make his own personal discovery of FAPA's doldrums. But of course it never occurs to me to quit, nor indeed do I want to quit, dreadful as FAPA's recent mailings (circa 1968-1970) have been. I keep thinking I will reform, you will reform, and that each new member will amaze and delight us all.

Perhaps some day soon this will really happen. Greg Benford's presidency and Gregg Calkins' FA are certainly positive steps in this direction. We shall see...we shall see.

WHERE WERE WE? The last issue of this august fapazine was published in Brooklyn, before I had even an intimation that fatherhood would soon be upon me. Presently I am sitting at my desk in a room which was once my father's bedroom, in Falls Church, Va., and the air is periodically punctuated with the noises of our nearly five-month old daughter. Perhaps this set of facts will do much to explain the absense of a NULL-F in recent mailings--and the absence of an issue number on this issue.

Arielle ("Kitten") White was born 5:18 am, August 28th. Hers was a "natural" birth, in that we used the Lamaze method of childbirth, sans drugs. The experience was a highpoint in our lives, and, as far as either of us is concerned, the only way to have children. The hospital (New York Hospital) encourages the Lamaze Method, and all the nurses and doctors were familiar with it and pleased we were "Lamazing it," as they put it. It's easy to understand why: Lamaze parents are a lot less trouble. Most of our friends (Hi there, Calvin & Wilma, Jim & Hilary, Greg & Joan!) have used the method successfully, and we never hesitated in chosing it.

Within a few days of Arielle's birth, I wrote a long column for EGOBOO called, "The Birth of my Daughter," in which I recounted our adventures in childbirth. Perhaps some day John Berry will publish that issue and the column will see print. In any case, I won't try to recapitulate it.

Having the baby turned out to be by far the easiest part. The problems began arising soon after.

Robin had "rooming-in," a procedure which theoretically allowed her to have her baby with her in the hospital, and allowed her to nurse the baby when necessarily. She had no problem with milk--the baby took immediately to nursing on the first try, and Robin's flow was bountiful.

But the nurses were another story. One was a petty tyrant who "went by the rules" in an inflexible fashion, and purely irritated the hell out of Robin. Arielle turned out to be one of those babies who does not willingly accomodate herself to a rigid four-hour feeding schedule, and this immediately set up a conflict between Robin and the nurse.

This was easily enough resolved to taking Robin and the baby home at the earliest opportunity, but it led directly to our next problem: the baby rarely let us sleep more than two hours uninterrupted on any night. (Even now, at almost five months, she occasionally demands to be fed in the middle of her sleep period.) The first month turned us into harried souls with red-rimmed eyes, and we did a lot of mumbling to ourselves about how "Just once I'd like a decent night's sleep--just once!"

Everyone said she'd outgrow this, and so she has, more or less. But certainly she has made heavy inroads into our life-styles, not all of which I will willingly grudge her. *Sigh*

As a baby, though, she is a delight. Definitely precocious in some ways, she lost no weight in the hospital, and gained weight quickly (all those feedings) in the months that followed. She is presently more than double her birth weight (almost sixteen pounds, now), and wearing clothing marked for nine months and up. She's a merry little thing, very active, full of impish smiles and grins and a dedicated charmer. She is, everyone tells me, a very beautiful baby (I agree), and when she demurely bats her half-inch long eyelashes at me, I'm completely won over. (Ghod only knows what she'll be doing when she's teenaged. Probably have me twisted around her little finger...) She learns so rapidly now, and that's a continuing delight. It seems as if each day she's learned new things to do.

We take her with us everywhere, but that has ruled out going to the movies, for example, and sometimes she's been a pest when she has decided--as at a party--that she isn't getting her share of attention.

When I think about the inconveniences imposed upon me by fatherhood, I wonder why we bothered, but the fact is that I regard fatherhood as an inevitable biological stage through which I must progress and which I'd never willingly surrender. I take all kinds of delight in having such a bright, pretty, healthy child, and although I think one is enough, if I had to go back and do it all over again (even knowing all I know) I'd still do it.

I had a flash, as I left the hospital the day she was born. I was exhilarated and exhausted, and consumed by the wonder of it all, and I had this sudden flash: I can't hold back time any more.

I'm thirty-two (and, when you read this I'll be thirty-three) but until last August I didn't really feel any different than I had at, say, twenty-seven, or twenty-three. I knew I'd gone through changes--many changes--since I'd married Sylvia at twenty, but it seemed as if the years were stacked side by side and not one atop the others. I felt no older than I ever had...a sort of timeless post-adolescence.

But having a child changes all that. A child is a yardstick of the years: as she grows older, so, inevitably, must we. And we won't be able to close our eyes to this fact, as we may have done in the past.

Moreover, in my own mind I've crossed a bridge. I've joined my parents' generation. I am now myself a parent.

I've noticed this difference also in the ways my parents now treat us. They come to me for my opinion as they never did before. They consider me a responsible adult now, as they never quite could before. I've joined their club.

This has been underlined by our move, of course.

For years I've wanted to get out of Brooklyn, much as I've loved New York City--and still do. I've wanted to get away from the paranoia of neighbors living overhead, of potential vandalism to any car I might park on the street, and from a landlady who, although better than most as a landlady, periodically annoyed me by her proximity. I wanted a place where any children I might have could grow up more healthily, and I wanted to live where I could breathe better air. Every so often we'd make plans for buying a farm somewhere, but something usually came up that forestalled us.

More than a year ago, my mother asked me if we'd like to live here. She and my father built this house thirty-five years ago, and she taught her own private kindergarten here for all those years, but 1970 was to be her last year. In June, 1970, she planned to retire. Against this eventuality she'd bought land in the Virginia mountains, forty or so miles to the west, some fifteen years ago. It was an excellent investment, and a few years ago she began building a house up there. It was finished this summer, and she and my father (now in his eighties and also retired) moved up there the last week in September. The house here in Falls Church, then, was mine if I wanted it. She made us the offer before Robin became pregnant, and our original plans were to move down this last summer, in June or July. The pregnancy forced us to hold back until the end of September, of course: we moved down the weekend after my mother moved out.

It was harder for her: this has been her home for thirty-five years, and you can accumulate a lot of stuff in thirty-five years. For me it was only a move from an apartment in which I'd lived $8\frac{1}{2}$ years. I wondered what it would be like to return to the house where I grew up, but it wasn't much as I expected. With our furniture and stuff, and the many changes I've made and am still making, the place won't be--isn't--that much like the house of my earliest memories. But then, it wasn't, anyway.

For Robin, the move was a wrenching one--she's never before lived outside NYC--but although there have been annoyances and adjustments, she's far happier having a house of her own, with surrounding land and trees and gardens, and that sense of genuine privacy which comes of no longer living in your neighbors' pockets. This is her first house.

Falls Church is a nice town--largely residential, middle- and upper-class--with excellent shopping facilities, good schools, etc., and lacking only in friends. Most of our friends remain in NYC, although we've attended WSFA meetings, and it's good to have people like the Haldemans in the area and pleasant to renew an old friendship with the Pavlats.

Greg and Jim Benford visited us in November, after attending a physics conference in Washington, and other friends are planning to drop down for weekends or longer. Alan Shaw is coming down this Wednesday for half a week. (I suspect we may usurp a tradition the Lupoffs established when they were living in Foughkeepsie and starved for company: invite a houseload of guests down for a weekend party...)

But for the most part we don't miss the constant fanac and social

life of New York--not as much as we expected to, at any rate. The baby fills up much of that lost time, of course, and then there's all the work I've been doing.

I've continued the editorship of AMAZING and FANTASTIC, of course. I've also continued designing the covers--something I hadn't expected to do. We've recently shifted printers (which, I think, will be a boon), and that has brought out a shift in scheduling--previously I prepared both AMAZING and FANTASTIC in one lump, every two months; now it appears I'll be doing each magazine separately, staggered, one each month--and this may or may not turn out to be more demanding of my time. I've been writing, of course, as sporadically as ever.

But now also I have the normal tasks of keeping up a house, and all the work and detail involved in making major conversions in the house. The entire section used as a school is now becoming part of our living quarters, and this has meant much carpentry, some electrical work, and some plumbing. The latter I'm not competent to deal with, but the rest I've been doing. This includes the conversion of one room into our master bedroom, which involved tearing out a wall, installing a twelve-foot-wide closet (with suspended sliding doors) and a small toilet. That is mostly finished, although I've yet to build the gadget-ridden headboard I've planned for the bed. Next is the conversion of the main schoolroom into a new livingroom. This involved two walls, floor to ceiling, of record shelves and book shelves (I have about thirty shelf-feet of records now; I'm providing 45 shelf-feet), the conversion of a boys' and girls' pair of toilets into a normal bathroom, etc. It's still in the building stages.

We've had some problems, mostly car problems. The starter in my 1955 Cadillac quit soon after we moved down, and I installed another, only to blow the engine (a rod went--at 60 mph) a week before Christmas. Fortunately, my grandmother lives next door, and I've been able to use her 1950 Plymouth for around-the-area driving. But travelling has been hampered.

SCIENCE FICTION: I sometimes wonder if FAPAns read the sf magazines any more. I know most sf pros don't; the typical SFWA member seems to think that sf starts and finishes with Orbit. But it might repay some of you if you glanced occasionally through an issue of AMAZING or FANTASTIC. You might be surprised at the number of your fellow members represented within the pages of these magazines.

It's been a long time since FAPA has had a prozine editor as a member, I think, and I guess it's still a coincidence even now. But people like Gordon Eklund have stories fairly regularly in my magazines--and his first, "Dear Aunt Annie," seems well on its way to a Nebula award. Bob Silverberg has a novel forthcoming in AMAZING--and it breaks just about all the remaining pulp publishing taboos, I think. Terry Carr is doing us a cover story, and Greg Benford does a regular science column as well as stories. Buck Coulson has a story in the May, 71 issue. Juanita will be appearing in FANTASTIC with a s&s series. Who else? Poul Anderson isn't precisely a FAPAN, but has a really excellent novel coming up in FANTASTIC. Dick Lupoff has had a very funny series of Ova Hamlet parodies running in FANTASTIC. I recently bought a whole slew of stories from Bill Rotsler. Calvin Demmon has sold us several. Etc. Even if you stopped reading sf years ago, aren't you curious about what your friends are doing...?

THE MOSKOWITZ CASE: There's something I don't properly understand about FAPA officers, and that's their remarkable consistency. This consistency lies in their refusal to admit mistakes, and, if mistakes are admitted, their refusal to make amends. Almost a decade ago, John Trimble threw Ed Martin out of FAPA on trumped up charges, and within a few months admitted his actions were groundless. But, having admitted this, did he do anything? Did he invite Martin back? No. The official line at that time was, "Why bother? Martin hasn't asked us to." The notion that this was their responsibility and not Martin's was alien to them. If Ed wouldn't beg for reinstatement, then the hell with him.

Last year, the same thing happened, in reverse. Sam Moskowitz relied for his renewal credentials on reprints. They were obviously reprints: they were photo-offset copies of the pages of original publication. The officials of FAPA ignored this and did nothing until Greg Benford wrote a letter to then-president Tackett. Roy turned the letter over to then-Veep Grennell. Dean's reaction was that as far as he was concerned, SaM was a member in good standing. This opinion was gratuitous--it wasn't the Veep's position to rule on the matter in the first place, and the Constitution was unequivocal on the subject anyway.

There the matter lay until Greg (in a phone conversation) told me about it. I wrote a letter to Grennell (with carbons to the other officers) asking for a justification of this high-handed and inappropriate ruling. Dean never answered my letter--to me. To others, he discussed my parentage and legitimacy in terms similar to those he once used on George Wetzel. Thus he discharged the duties of his high office.

Tackett never answered, either. Bob Pavlat did, though, to agree with me that Moskowitz lacked renewal credentials, and to point out that the matter was properly the province of Sec-Treas Bill Evans. He also wrote Bill (with a carbon to me) officially asking for his opinion. Bill's response was to send a letter to SaM advising him that he lacked renewal credentials, and telling him that he was out as a member unless he a) took issue with the ruling, in which case an appeal to the Veep was in order, or b) circulated a petition, either to waive the year's renewal requirements or to postpone them a mailing. But he'd have to do something.

Bill sent me a carbon of his letter to SaM, and that was the last I heard of the case. SaM remained a member, no mention of his case ever came up in the FA, and it appeared that the case had been dropped. Why?

The story I've heard since is that SaM pettifogged by pointing to Grennell's prior ruling in his favor, and that no one confronted him with its inappropriateness. In other words, a mistake (or series of mistakes) had been made in ignoring the delinquency of SaM's membership, but no one had the guts to do anything about it--not even Evans.

The situation was absurd, but typical.

Hopefully, it will not continue. Greg Benford tells me that as President he is reviewing both the Martin and Moskowitz cases with a view to reversing them. I know of no reason a subsequent administration couldn't set prior mistakes to right--but it flies in the face of all tradition.

Sam Moskowitz's personality does not--or should not--figure in a situation so cut-and-dried. No ambiguity exists whatsoever: only in-

competancy on the part of at least half of last year's administration. (Specifically, Tackett and Grennell.)

I was tempted to have several of my editorials from AMAZING and FANTASTIC reprinted by photo-offset for my renewal credits last summer, but it occurred to me that Dean Grennell would probably regard consistency as a hobgoblin of little minds and order me thrown out.

No doubt the FA in this mailing will shed more light on this case. It would certainly be nice to see the rules enforced even-handedly in this organization--for a change.

APOLLO 14: February 4 was my birthday, and when we got up that morning, it was snowing. A phone call from my mother assured us that the roads were still open up on her mountain, so we put Kitten in her snowsuit and loaded up my grandmother's Plymouth with the four of us and set out to make the journey to my mother's house.

The streets were coated with a slick film of icy slush, and Route 7 west--once the historic Alexandria-Leesburg Turnpike, now the "Harry Flood Byrd Highway", *sigh*--was white with dark tracks. The trip is normally an easy one of around forty miles, and I've done it in three-quarters of an hour on many occasions. This time it took about double the time and I rarely exceeded 45 mph.

Just east of Leesburg, one takes a Bypass 15 North which links up, north of Leesburg, with Rt. 15 N. Some miles further north, one leaves the highway for an unpaved road which winds through farmland and up the closest of the Blue Ridge Mountains. My mother's new home is near the mountain's crest, and located along the ridge with magnificent views in both directions. The road is narrow and steep, and local etiquette says that the driver heading uphill must back down again if he meets another car coming down. The road was snow-covered and somewhat icy as well (the snow had turned to sleet), but we met no one going up. Just as well, I thought.

It was a pleasant afternoon, with a fine dinner and a birthday cake, but all too soon it was dark and time to be heading back. I had to scrape ice from the car's windows, and the roads were treacherous, but we made it home without incident. I felt like I had undergone an adventure.

That night I stayed up to watch the Apollo 14 telecasts, and for some reason my sense of wonder remained dormant. The adventure of driving some eighty miles in hazardous conditions was more exciting than the second live telecast from the moon.

I lay on my couch with the earphones on and listened to music while the tv set flashed its pictures sans sound. Periodically I glanced in its direction for signs of interest. I listened to the report of the latest snafu (a malfunction in the abort program which was solved by a longhair from MIT); watched a simulated landing on the moon, listened to more music, dozed, and then, a new day fully upon me--drizzly; ice-shrouded--I listened with mounting impatience while Houston said, "Fine, we see your foot coming down the ladder," and some nincompoop was too caught up in it to throw the switch to let the rest of the world see.

I needn't have fretted. The picture came on and, like those before it from the moon, it was impressive but dull.

Impressive, because it was real, immediate, live and from the moon. Impressive, because it was an opportunity to watch men schlep about on the moon's surface with a genuine Lunar gait.

But dull. Awfully dull. The picture quality was lousy. Not just on my set (I watched Channel 7--ABC--because I get that channel most

clearly), but in published newspaper photos taken off the tube as well. It was a genuine strain to watch it. And so static. Nothing moves on the moon: the landscape is totally unchanging. And the camera was fixed, on a tripod. Once in a while one of the men would move it about, but even when it was focussed on them their actions were slow, deliberate and without drama. (For the most part, they were also impossible to follow or unexplained.)

There is, of course, no real reason why a historic landing on the moon should be produced for television like another entertainment show. But somehow it seemed that all the Good Stuff was missing. The landing, for example, and the takeoff later: why couldn't they be televised, automatically, by remotely-placed cameras? I recall watching several years ago the televised pictures of an unmanned rocket that crashed into the moon--right up to the moment of the crash, when the screen went dark. I'd risen at some ungodly early hour to catch it, and I remember enthusing later about it: "Imagine, live pictures, from the moon!"

If not for the obvious visual effects of 1/6 G, the whole set of moon shots this time out could have been better made in Hollywood. In fact, they have been--twenty years ago.

And that seems a pity.

STEREO EQUIPMENT: I hear Bob Silverberg has finally broken down and purchased stereo equipment. I am stunned, but pleased for Bob. Sooner or later one comes to the realization that stereo isn't a gimmick, and that the music on records is much clearer when spacial differentiation is possible. For me it isn't so much the "realism" implicit in stereo (and much more so in quadraphony), but my added opportunity to isolate instruments and musical lines for closer scrutiny (if that's the word I want) in complex pieces. Music has always been an ongoing process of discovery for me: the opportunity to find new things to listen for on each hearing. Stereo simply gives me a clearer view--like glasses for my myopia.

But for many years I resisted headphones. I don't know why; it's really inexplicable--perhaps as much so as Bob's longstanding resistance to stereo. But last summer I realized that headphones offered several distinct advantages.

Robin was pregnant and loud noises bothered her. In fact, much of the music I was listening to--fast-tempoed, "high-energy" stuff, ripe with discords--bothered her. Not just the rock, but the Berio, the Messian, the Mingus. (I wrote a 77-page chronological discography of Mingus and in the process relistened to all his over-thirty albums.) Earphones made good sense.

I read up on the various types of headphones and decided on the Fisher HP 100. This is a so-called " earmuff " headphone, with foam ear pads that rest against the ears, and much more comfortable and less tiring than the ordinary type of phones. I found a source at a 30% discount (The Stereo Corp. of America--they advertise in HIGH FIDELITY and STEREO REVIEW), and bought a set. I also had to buy a junction box, since my Dyna preamp has no headphone plug.

I found the phones startling. Their clarity was pronounced. I found I could hear things I'd never heard on my records before. Like, on a Bernstein recording, the sounds of the musicians turning their sheet music. On another classical album, I actually and literally heard the spittal drip from a French horn. It was astonishing. Talk about

clarity! I found myself listening to all sorts of obscure and arcane features, such as room acoustics, production values, close-miking techniques on acoustic guitars, etc. The stereo was more pronounced: I could pinpoint the placement of individual instruments. And, best of all, I could enjoy a volume level tailored for me, with no worries about disturbing either Robin or my neighbors (who for some reason used to grow angry when I played music at 4:00 am).

I bragged the phones up to Terry and Carol Carr, and when they came over and tried them, they too were amazed and delighted. Terry immediately asked me to get him a pair. "Get two pair," Carol said. "That way we won't have to fight over them."

I got three pair--the third for ourselves, so Robin and I could both use them.

Now I'm planning to wire the house for them, so I can plug them in here, in my office, while typing, or up in the bedroom while lazing in bed, or, indeed, downstairs where the drafting table and mimeo equipment are.

It's the next step, Bob.

WEISS RAK VIII: I mentioned the WR VII, my '55 Cadillac, giving up the ghost. Well, I now have a new car: a 1961 VW. Until last week, it belonged to my mother. Last week she bought a 1966 VW 1300 (in excellent shape), and turned the older bug over to me in exchange for various expenditures I've made on this place.

It's not my ideal in cars. I regard VWs as deathtraps, frankly. And this one, although it has a sound body, is nothing to rave about. Two of its four spark plugs are frozen into the engine, for example, and oil is leaking into the heating system. Ghod only knows how long it will hold up. I'm not planning any long trips in it.

But as a local runabout, it has a good deal to recommend it. It is easy to maneuver, cheap to operate, and a lot more fun to drive than a 1950 Plymouth. (The Plymouth may also wind up in my hands. My grandmother is in her eighties and doesn't know how much longer she'll be able to continue to drive...)

The other night--the night it snowed and sleeted and all--I took it out for a buzz around the neighborhood. It was a delight to drive in snow, and I held it down in second and threw it into a series of powered slides and had one hell of a good time with it. It occurred to me that this must be much of the fun in driving dunebuggies in the dunes.

But somewhere during that short adventure I flashed on the fact that once, eleven years ago, I'd wanted a VW, and that my desires in cars seemed to be about a decade in fullfilment. Strangely, VWs haven't fitted my self-image in a good many years now. All it takes is a bad accident or a couple of near-misses to convince one that he is much safer enwrapped in a ton or two of steel. Had I been in this VW when that truck rear-ended me in 1968 I'd be dead now. On occasion that thought occurs to me these days, and with very little pleasure.

But there it is: gift cars don't exactly rain upon me, so as yet I've not stared this one in the mouth--I haven't even opened the front trunk, in fact. I'm afraid of what I might find in there...

Ted White 2/71

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